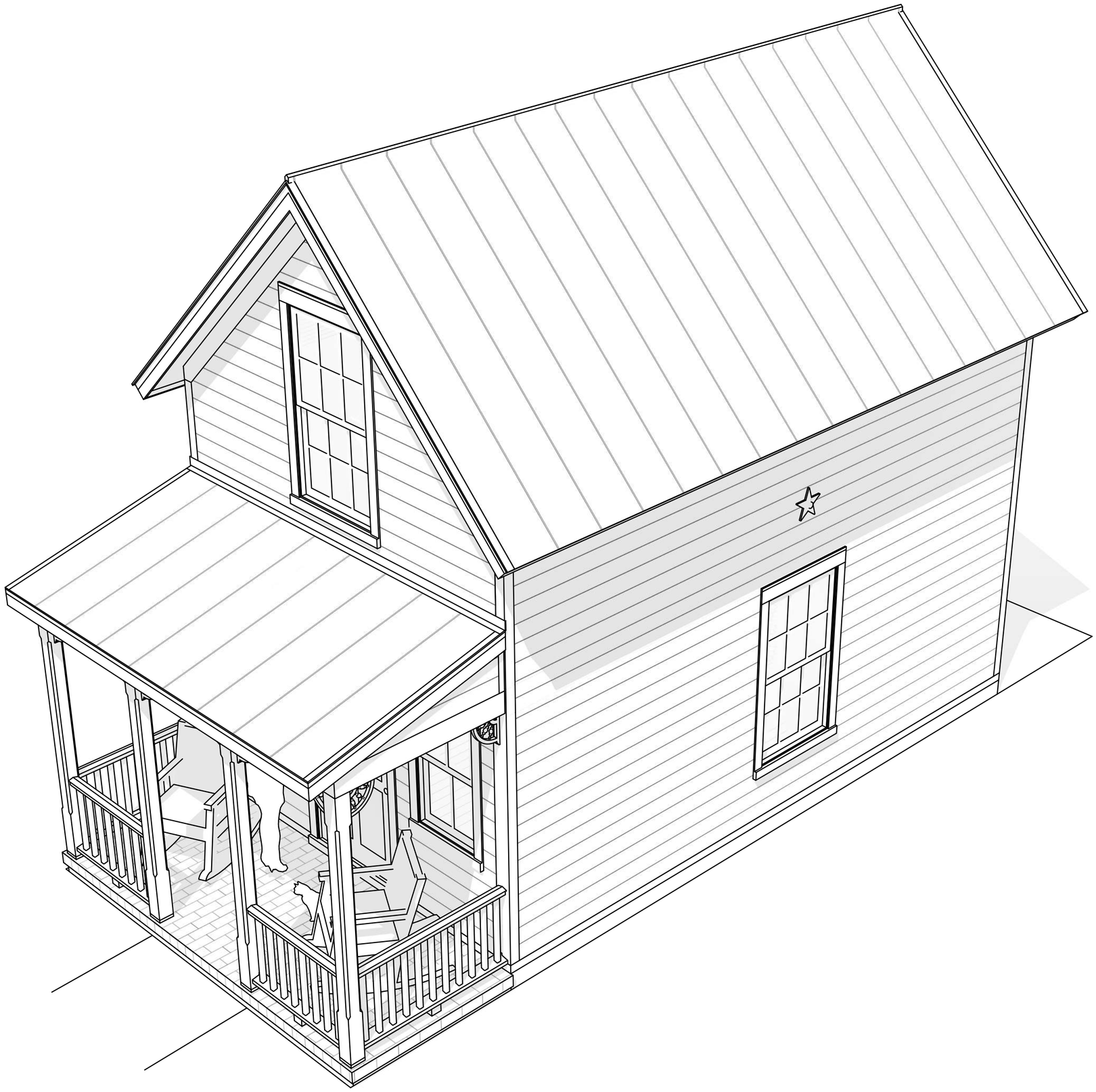


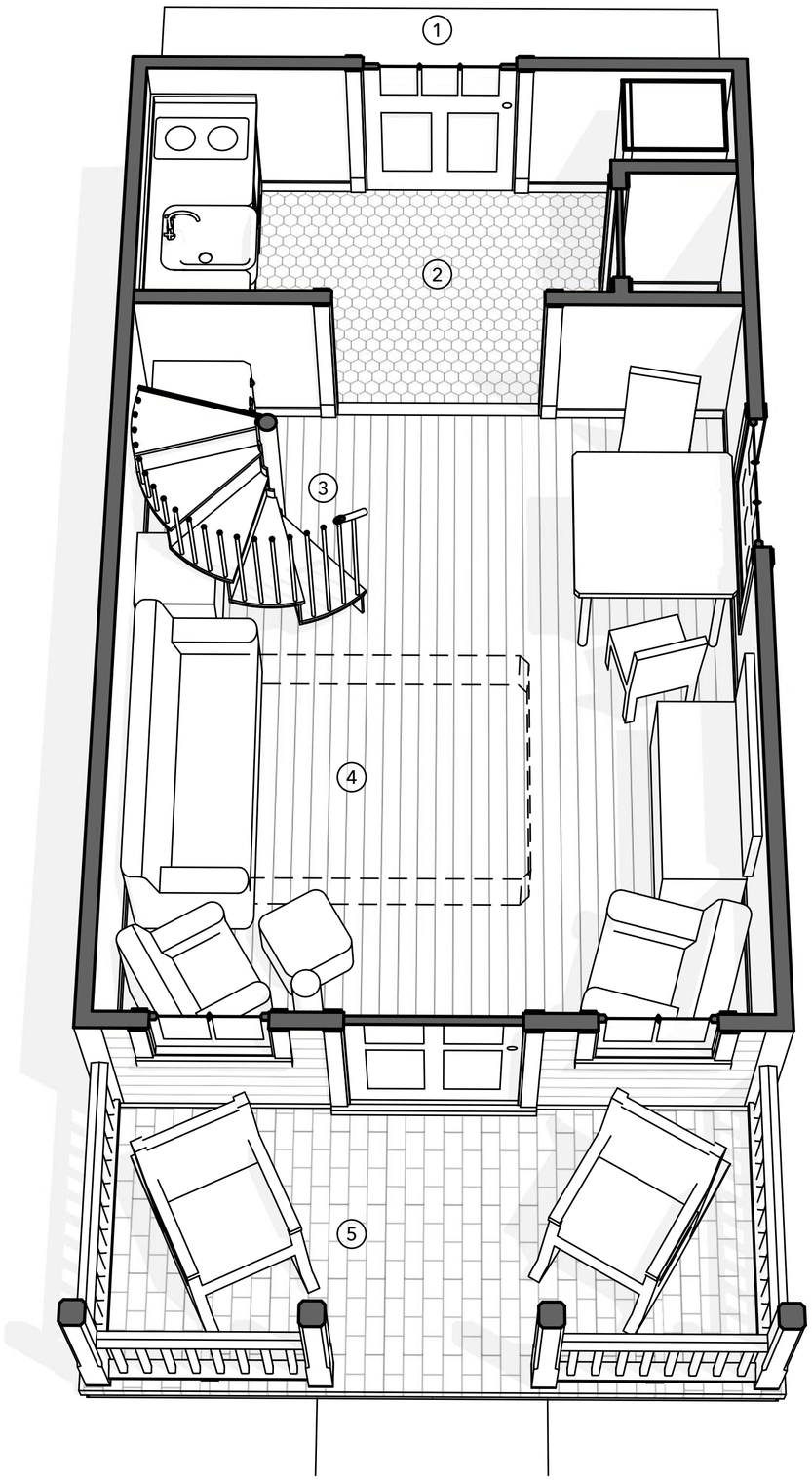
LONE STAR FARMHOUSE

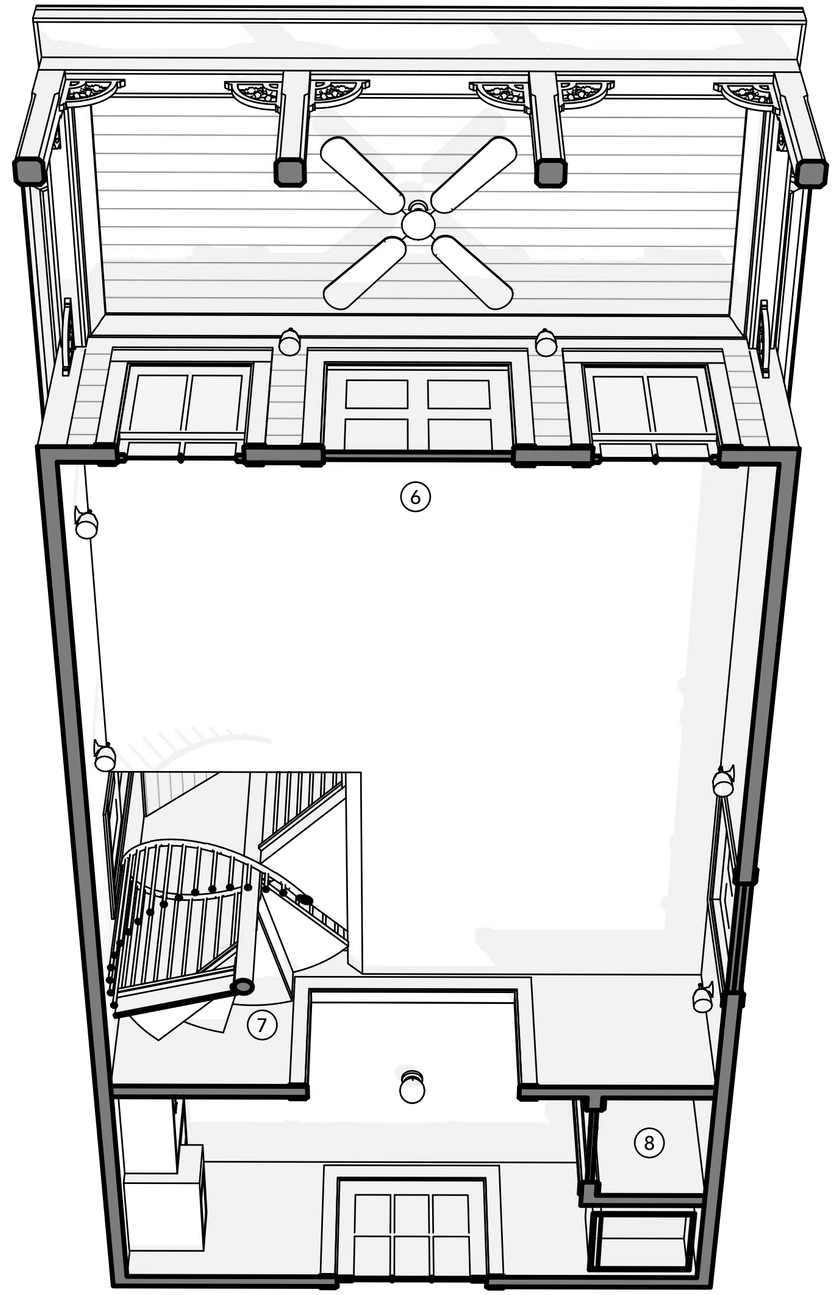
PROJECT OVERVIEW

A DESIGN BY JAY OSBORNE

While working on my Backyard Farmhouse designs, I often wondered just how tiny a two-story house could be. How low could the roof eave be? How low can the ceilings be? How small can a bedroom be? What's the most efficient way to get to the upper level? I decided to test the limits, and also create a design that is simpler and more economical than my previous cottage designs, and made for one person.

The Lone Star Farmhouse is the result of this experiment. In it, I tried to boil the essence of a farmhouse into the tiniest package allowed by code. Though it can be smaller by 10-15 percent if it had a flat roof and higher ceilings, this design would still appear smaller. The low roof minimizes the blocking of sunlight and views, which can make this adorable home a gentle and softspoken neighbor.





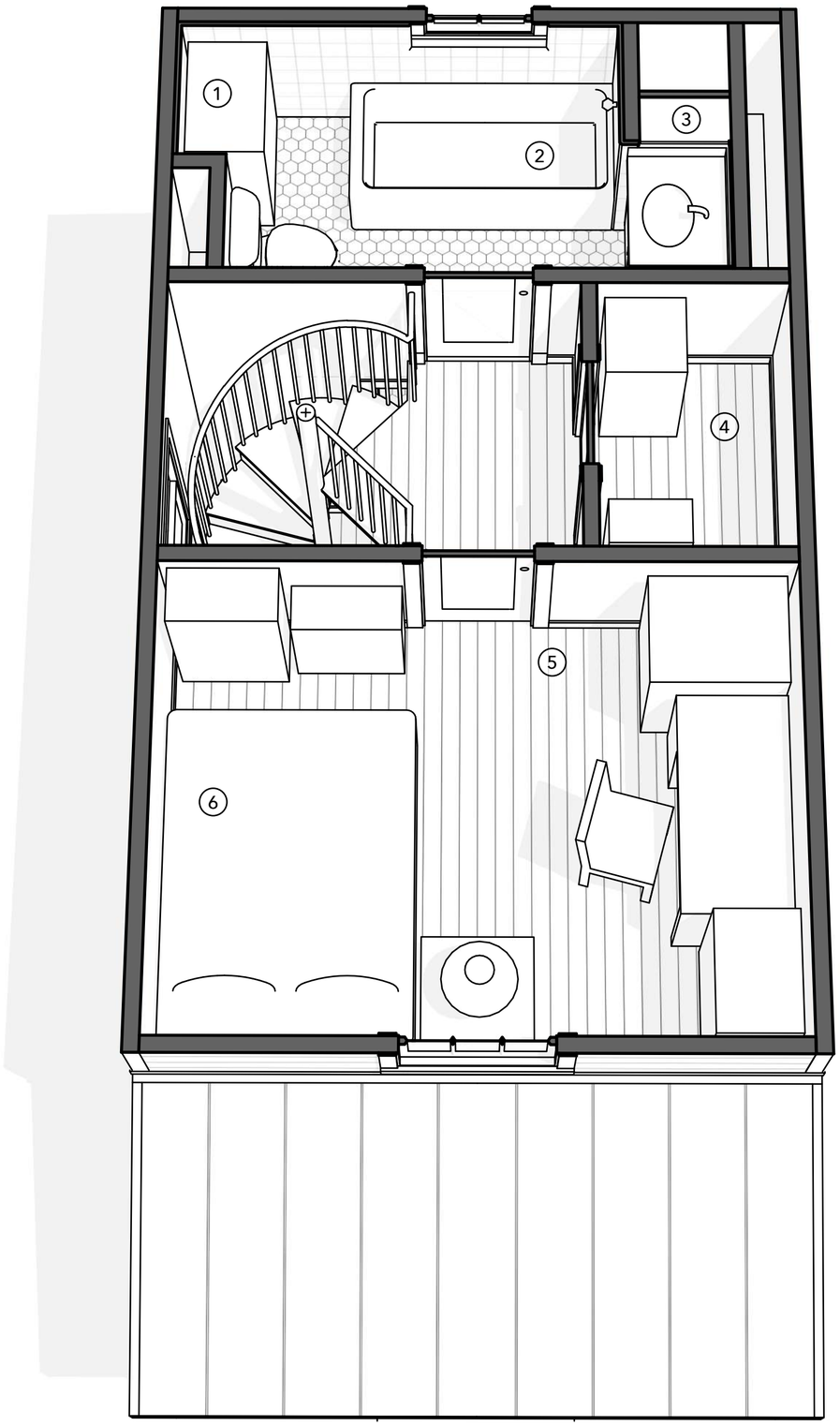
(1) The back door leads into the kitchen. This could also be the front door, if it's better to position the porch to the back. **(2)** The kitchen is partially enclosed to make the living area more intimate. It's usually a good idea to separate formal and informal functions. **(3)** Spiral staircases are the most efficient way to get to another floor. They take remarkably little space compared to other stair types.

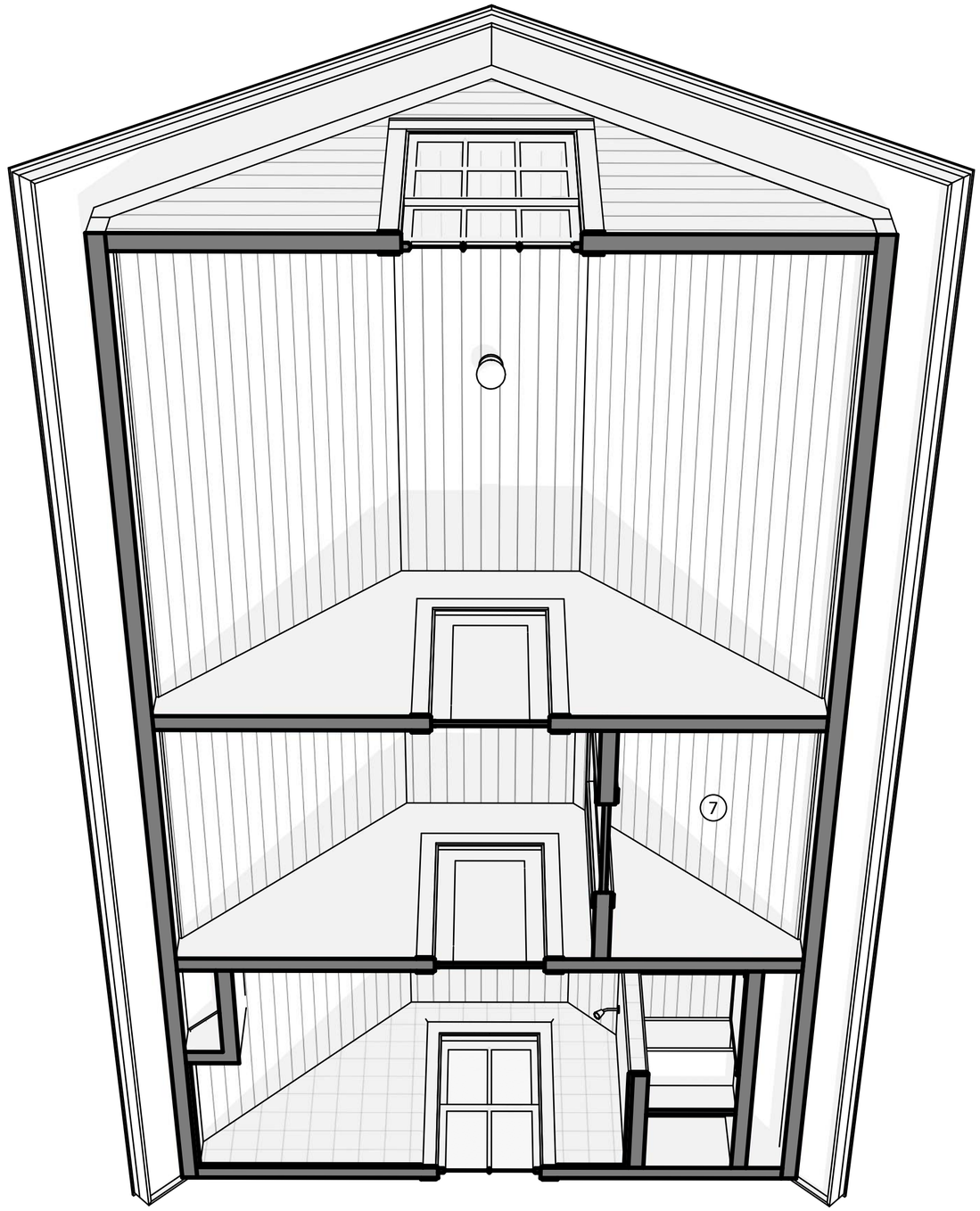
LONE STAR FARMHOUSE

FIRST LEVEL

A DESIGN BY JAY OSBORNE

(4) A sofa bed allows the living room to be a guest bedroom. **(5)** The front porch could be located towards the back, depending on site conditions like views, and solar orientation. **(6)** As a front door, this one is better solid (for privacy). As a back door, it would be better with glazing. **(7)** The cased opening at the kitchen helps keep you from bumping your head on the stairs. **(8)** A utility or coat closet.





(1) At this low corner in the bathroom, there's space for furniture, like something for organizing toiletries. **(2)** The shower can only be put near the center, where the ceiling is highest. The doors are also located where they are for that reason. **(3)** The space behind the bathroom sink is low, but this area could have shelves. Deeper shelves aren't as practical (things get buried) but they are still possible.

LONE STAR FARMHOUSE

SECOND LEVEL

A DESIGN BY JAY OSBORNE

(4) This closet has space for hanging clothing, or for shelves. A laundry machine could be placed in this closet, but it would get crowded fast. **(5)** The bedroom door could be 6" wider, but then it will have to be offcenter or else hit the bed. **(6)** A full/double bed is fine for one person or a young couple. Pick your luxuries. **(7)** The closet's ceiling dives down, and will require hanging clothing fairly low.

The Lone Star Farmhouse is like the Sunday houses built by German immigrants in the hill country near Fredericksburg, Texas. In the decades flanking the year 1900, farmers and ranchers would come to town on weekends, living in tiny homes this size. Those had no conveniences like bathrooms, indoor stairs, or a private bedroom. So this house design is made for today's lifestyle necessities.

LONE STAR FARMHOUSE

FRONT OF THE HOUSE

A DESIGN BY JAY OSBORNE

(1) The house's ornament, like these spindle wheel brackets, goes along with the star theme. **(2)** The bedroom window is as small as possible by code (an emergency exit). If smaller, it couldn't be double-hung. **(3)** The railing provides a little privacy for the porch, but it can (and should) be fairly short. **(4)** Here, this cast iron star tieback is only decorative. They're functional on old masonry walls.

LONE STAR FARMHOUSE

BACK OF THE HOUSE

A DESIGN BY JAY OSBORNE

(1) This back door could easily be the front door instead. For daylighting at the kitchen, the glazing is highly recommended. The small roof awning over the door does wonders for protecting it from long-term rot or midday overheating. **(2)** Pots or planters could flank this door for a more formalized entry. **(3)** Because of the high window, this is the better side for parking vehicles (for less visibility).

(4) The roof shape is as simple as possible, making it cheaper and easier to build than roofs that have dormers or cross gables. The slope is 12/12, which is a bit steep. A 10/12 (aka 4/5) slope is historically more common, mainly because it looks better on larger houses. Yet smaller gables (less than 18 feet across) often had 12/12 slopes. They're slightly easier to build, and normal for modest homes.

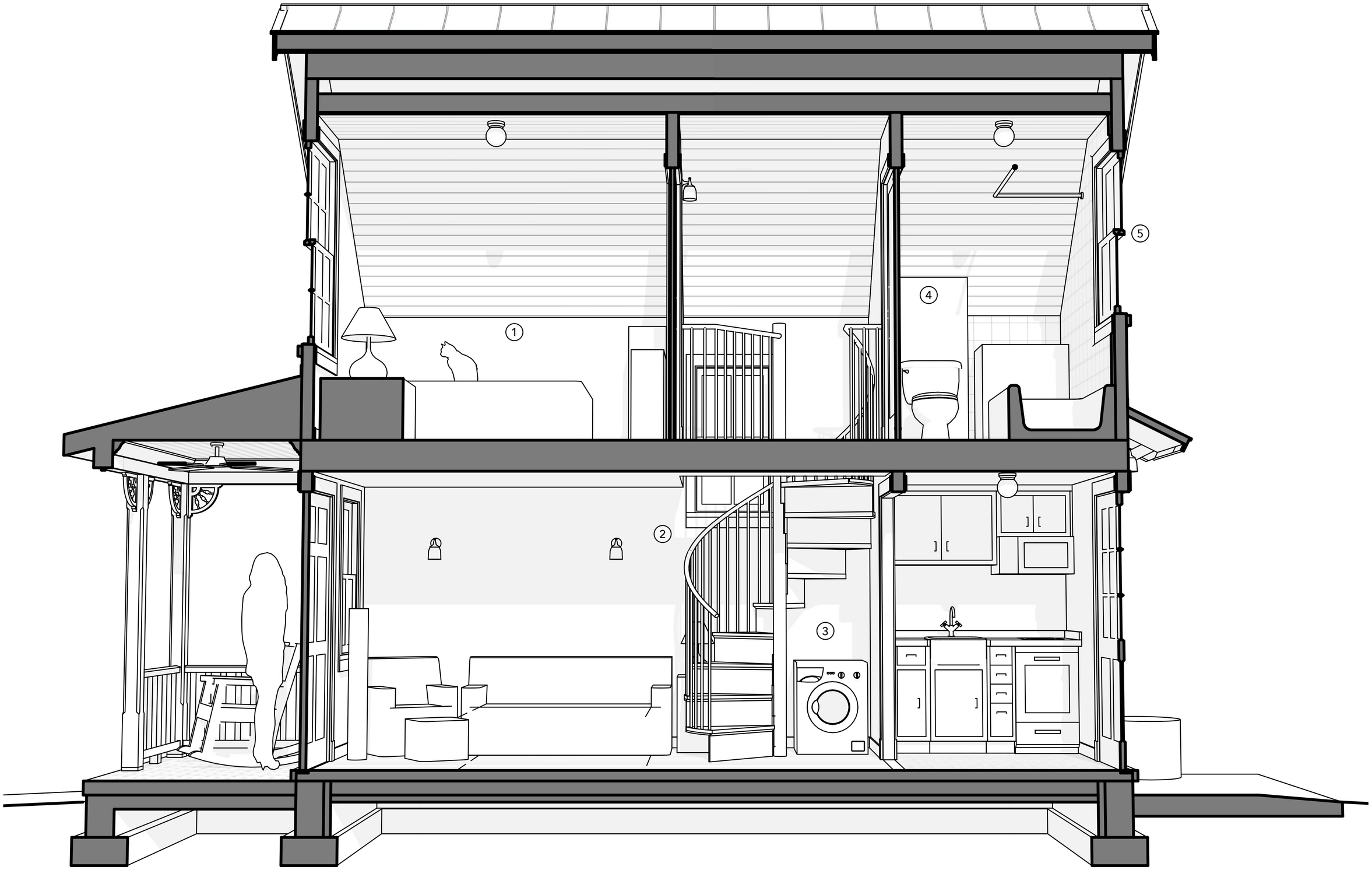
LONE STAR FARMHOUSE

STAIRCASE SECTION

A DESIGN BY JAY OSBORNE

(1) This design is compressed as much as possible, but it still has a roof height that's about the same as those in my Backyard Farmhouse designs. It just barely fits within some common, unreasonable zoning height limits for accessory dwelling units (ADUs). It can't be shortened without violating building codes (or else flattening the roof and sinking the slab– that causes long-term problems).

(2) The upstairs doors can't be moved. They're where the ceiling is high enough.
(3) This closet is as small as practical. Yet bedroom closets are rarely required by law (building codes are intended mostly for safety and wellbeing, unlike zoning).
(4) The downstairs ceiling is as low as possible. It's important to consider the required headroom at the stairs. As designed, they fit, but with little wiggle room.



(1) The walls are 4 feet high at their lowest. This is fairly comfortable as long as furniture is placed against the walls. The bedroom will feel cozy and tent-like. **(2)** This windows helps cross ventilation and daylighting, especially for the upper hall. **(3)** A washer dryer combo unit can fit under the stairs. A curtain can be strung between the center post and the wall (right by the cased opening).

LONE STAR FARMHOUSE

SECTION PERSPECTIVE

A DESIGN BY JAY OSBORNE

(4) The ceiling at the back of the bathroom fixtures needs to be at least 5′ tall. At the front of the fixtures, it needs to be 6′-8″ or more. **(5)** The bathtub is located where the ceiling is high enough. For privacy, the window would have shutters or curtains on the lower sash (or perhaps stained or frosted glass). The upper sash is situated higher than the average adult's eye level, so it might be kept open.